



Guinea-Bissau

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Guinea-Bissau* continued its transition to a multiparty democracy following the end of the 1998-99 bloody civil war that led to the ouster of President Bernardo Viera by a military junta. The country is led by President Koumba Yala of the Partido de Renovacao Social (PRS), who was elected in January 2000 with a 72 percent electoral majority in a runoff election. The 1999 legislative elections began the transition to democracy; the PRS won 38 of 102 National Assembly seats in the elections. The PRS victory ended the 26-year domination of the African Party for the Independence of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde (PAIGC). Local and international observers considered both elections to be generally free and fair, although there were reports of some irregularities in the November 1999 election. During the year, the country was characterized by political and economic instability after the President expelled an Islamic religious group in August, which provoked a major confrontation involving the executive, judicial, and legislative branches over the limits of presidential power. When the Supreme Court declared the expulsion unconstitutional, Yala dismissed the President of the Supreme Court and four other justices on charges of corruption. The National Assembly criticized the dismissals and supported the Court's decision. Yala subsequently informed the National Assembly that he had the constitutional power to suspend the National Assembly for 10 years. The struggle between the President and the other branches of the Government polarized the citizenry. There was dissent within the PRS. President Yala tried to justify his actions as constitutional and intended to preserve political stability. He called the dismissed justices corrupt, mediocre, and liars; however, he did not provide evidence to support these assertions. In December President Yala reshuffled his cabinet for the third time since he became president, and the political situation continued to be unstable at year's end. The Constitution provides for an independent judiciary; however, it is subject to political influence and corruption, and was undermined by the President's dismissal of the five justices.

The police, under the direction of the Ministry of the Interior, have primary responsibility for the country's internal security; however, a lack of resources and training continued to hamper their effectiveness. The armed forces are responsible for external security and can be called upon to assist the police in internal emergencies. Following pressure from international donor groups, the Government announced plans for a comprehensive demobilization program to restructure the armed forces and improve military living conditions. The military remains loyal to the President and generally was under his full control and responsive to him. However, on December 3, some members of the military allegedly attempted a coup d'etat; 28 officers were arrested and detained. Members of the police and the military committed serious human rights abuses.

The population of approximately 1.3 million relies largely upon subsistence agriculture and the export of cashew nuts. Since the end of the civil war in 1999, cashew crop yields have increased significantly; however, during the year, the world market for cashews collapsed and prices dropped to record lows. Annual per capita gross domestic product (GDP) was estimated at \$170 (128,000 CFA francs). The GDP has improved modestly since 1998 and is estimated at \$1.1 billion (814 million CFA francs). The country remained burdened by heavy external debt and massive underemployment.

The Government's human rights record was generally poor, and serious problems remained. Citizens were allowed to vote in generally free and fair elections. Members of the security forces continued to use beatings, physical mistreatment, and other means to abuse persons; one detainee reportedly died while in detention. Arbitrary arrest and detention were problems, and included journalists and members of the Supreme Court. The Government did not punish any members of the security forces for such abuses. The Government at times used incommunicado detention. Prison conditions remained poor. The judiciary is subject to political influence and corruption, and the President removed five Supreme Court justices during the year. The Government infringed on citizens' privacy rights. The Government increased its limits on freedom of the press, and journalists practiced self-censorship. The President banned an Islamic religious group and expelled its

members. The Government at times restricted freedom of movement. Violence and discrimination against women were problems. Female genital mutilation (FGM) was practiced widely. Child labor, including some forced child labor, persisted.

RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Section 1 Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom From:

a. Arbitrary or Unlawful Deprivation of Life

There were no reports of the arbitrary or unlawful deprivation of life by the Government or its agents.

One soldier, detained after the 2000 attempted coup, reportedly died in detention (see Sections 1.c. and 1.d.). In addition one officer reportedly died in custody after he was detained in connection with the December alleged coup attempt.

Although reliable statistics were not available, during the year, at least seven persons were killed by landmine explosions (see Section 1.c.).

No action was taken, nor is any action likely to be taken, on the killings committed during the 1998-99 civil war by either government or rebel forces.

b. Disappearance

There were no reports of politically motivated disappearances.

c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

The Constitution prohibits such practices, and evidence obtained through torture or coercion is invalid; however, the Government often ignored these provisions, and security forces beat, mistreated, and otherwise abused persons. Human rights observers noted repeated instances of police and members of the armed forces beating and abusing civilians for minor social or legal infractions. Several journalists reported abuse while in detention (see Section 2.a.). Security and police authorities historically have employed abusive interrogation methods, usually in the form of severe beatings or deprivation. The Government rarely enforced provisions for punishment of abuses committed by security forces.

In January Fernando Gomes, president of the Socialist Alliance of Guinea (Bissau) and former President of the Guinea-Bissau Human Right League (LGDH), checked into Simao hospital in Bissau after suffering a number of beatings ostensibly by security forces while he was in incommunicado detention in May 2000.

In October the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) news reported that President Yala had threatened to shoot any politician trying to enter a military barracks in order to use the army against him.

In November 2000, the Government arrested approximately 400 citizens and soldiers immediately following an attempted coup by General Mane (see Section 1.d.). Inacio Tavares, president of the LGDH, alleged that the soldiers were held in three military camps, sometimes without drinking water, food, or medical attention. In December 2000, he accused the military of physical abuse, torture, and persecution of the families of suspects. One soldier reportedly died while in detention.

No action was taken to investigate or prosecute members of the security forces for abuses committed prior to the May 1999 coup.

Although reliable statistics were not available, during the year, landmine explosions injured at least nine persons (see Section 1.a.).

Prison conditions remained poor, but generally they were not life threatening. Beatings were used as a means of coercion. Prison authorities had very little control over inmates, many of whom simply left during the day. The prison in Bissau is overcrowded and without running water or adequate sanitation. Detainees' diets are poor and medical care is limited or nonexistent. In 1998 the European Union renovated two prisons, but following the fighting in 1999, no further repairs have been made. Many prisons were damaged during the

fighting in 1999, and the inmates escaped and have not been recaptured. Men and women are held in separate facilities, and juveniles are held separately from adults. Pretrial detainees are not held separately from convicted prisoners.

The Human Rights League was given access to most prisoners and detainees during the year. The office of the Special Representative of the U.N. Secretary General (UNOGBIS) visited high profile prisoners during the year, and was instrumental in assuring their well being and providing them with food and medical care. By year's end, all were released except for the approximately 28 arrested following the alleged December 3 coup attempt (see Section 1.d.).

d. Arbitrary Arrest, Detention, or Exile

The Constitution prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention; however, security forces arbitrarily arrested and detained persons, including journalists and members of the Supreme Court.

The law provides for procedural rights, such as the right to counsel, the right to release if no timely indictment is brought, and the right to a speedy trial; however, in practice the judicial system generally failed to provide these rights (see Section 1.e.).

Police detained suspects without judicial authority or warrants, occasionally using house arrest.

During the year, the Government arrested and detained numerous journalists and other members of the media (see Section 2.a.).

In early November, President Yala ordered Emiliano Nosolini, President of the Supreme Court, his deputy, and a senior accounting official to be arrested and detained (see Section 1.e.). They were charged with corruption following an audit of Supreme Court finances and remain in detention at year's end.

In December authorities arrested and detained 28 members of the military following an alleged coup attempt on December 3. The Government did not release publicly any evidence linking the 28 detainees to the reported coup. At year's end, they still were in incommunicado detention and had not been charged. Human rights nongovernmental organization (NGO's) had not been permitted access to the detainees. In December the President appointed a Supreme Military Tribunal to try the detainees.

In November 2000, the Government arrested approximately 400 citizens and soldiers immediately following an attempted coup by General Mane. Inacio Tavares, the president of the LGDH, accused the military of physical abuse, torture, and persecution of the families of suspects (see Section 1.c.). He called for accelerated hearings, and by the end of 2000, many of the arrested had been released. In February Amnesty International reported that 124 military and security officers remained in detention without formal charges, in "appalling conditions." One detainee already had died and others were in serious condition. In May the Government released 92 detainees. By October the remainder had been released.

In November 2000, the Government arrested several opposition politicians on suspicion that they had supported the attempted coup by General Mane. Those detained included PAIGC president Francisco Benante, Fernando Gomes, Fernando Mendoca, and several members of the Union for Change opposition party, including Amine Saad (the former Procurator General), Manuel Rambout Barcelos, Caramba Ture (a member of the National Assembly), and Agnello Regala (director of Bombolon Radio). They reportedly were held for almost a week before a judge released them for lack of evidence. President Yala invalidated their passports and placed them under house arrest in Bissau. At year's end, some remained under house arrest. Francisco Benante, Agnello Regala, and others arrested in connection with the November 2000 coup attempt still were not issued passports by year's end and were restricted in that they were required to report to the Public Ministry twice a week.

Afonso Te, Vieira's former deputy chief of staff, was released from prison; he was arrested in connection with the May 1999 coup.

The Government does not use forced exile.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The Constitution provides for an independent judiciary; however, judges are trained and paid poorly and sometimes are subject to political pressure and corruption. The Supreme Court is especially vulnerable to

political pressure, because its members are appointed by the President and serve at his pleasure. In November 2000, the President of the Supreme Court was elected democratically by his colleagues and officially installed in December 2000; the President did not appoint him. In previous years, there was some evidence that the judiciary retained a degree of independence; however, the judiciary was subject to executive influence and control. When the Supreme Court declared unconstitutional President Yala's ban on the Islamic group Ahmadiya and the expulsion of its members from the country in August, President Yala dismissed the Supreme Court President, Emiliano Nosolini, and four other justices on charges of corruption. The National Assembly strongly criticized the dismissals and supported the Court's decision. In October judges and prosecutors throughout the country organized a 30-day strike in protest of the removal of the justices (see Section 6.a.). In early November, President Yala ordered Supreme Court President Nosolini, his deputy, and a senior accounting official to be arrested and detained. At year's end, all three still were in detention and had been charged with misuse of official funds. The President replaced Nosolini with his former political adviser, Mario Lopes.

Civilian courts conduct trials involving state security. Under the Code of Military Justice, military courts only try crimes committed by armed forces personnel. In December President Yala appointed a Supreme Military Tribunal to try the soldiers in detention for involvement in the alleged December 3 coup attempt (see Section 1.d.). The Supreme Court is the final court of appeal for both military and civilian cases. The President has the authority to grant pardons and reduce sentences.

Citizens who cannot afford an attorney have the right to a court-appointed lawyer.

Traditional law still prevails in most rural areas, and persons who live in urban areas often bring judicial disputes to traditional counselors to avoid the costs and bureaucratic impediments of the official system. The police often resolve disputes.

There were no reports of political prisoners.

f. Arbitrary Interference with Privacy, Home, or Correspondence

The Constitution prohibits such actions; however, the Government does not always respect these prohibitions in practice. The police do not always use judicial warrants and have forced entry into some private homes. There were unconfirmed reports that police searched the mail.

Section 2 Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Speech and Press

The Constitution provides for freedom of speech and of the press; however, during the year, the Government steadily increased limits on the independence of the press. In March the Vice-Procurator General advised the domestic media to practice "self-censorship"; journalists still practice self-censorship.

On March 14, Adolfo Palma, a correspondent of the Portuguese news agency Lusa, faced charges of defamation for his report of the arrest of four persons in February. The Government insists that only three persons were arrested.

The privately owned *Diario de Bissau* published several times a week during the year; other newspapers, including *Banobero*, *Gazeta de Noticias*, and *No Pintcha*, were weeklies. A new privately owned weekly paper named "Fraskera" was publishing at year's end. All of the newspapers published only sporadically during the year due to financial constraints and dependence on the state-owned printing house. The national printing press, the only facility for publishing newspapers in the country, often lacked the raw materials to publish them.

In October Attorney General Caetano Intchama shut down two of the country's private newspapers, *Diario de Bissau*, and *Gazeta de Noticias*, for causing "irreparable damage" to the independence of the nation and operating without a license. Observers criticized the closures as violations of freedom of the press and a deliberate move to create a climate of intimidation. The *Diario de Bissau* and the *Gazeta de Noticias* remained closed at year's end.

On January 27, Amnesty International reported that Bacar Tcherno Dole, a journalist for the national radio and for the weekly newspaper *No Pintcha*, was arrested and held without charge for a report on an attack in the Sao Domingos area of the country by Casamancais rebels. He was abused physically and intimidated by the military and police during his detention.

In June the authorities arrested newspaper owner Joao de Barros and journalist Athizar Mendes after they published an article linking President Yala to corruption; they later were released on bail. De Barros accused the President of spending exorbitant amounts of money on trips to other African nations. Amnesty International criticized the arrest as "arbitrary"; there were no warrants.

In 2000 the independent stations Radio Pidjiguiti and Radio Mavegro resumed broadcasting; however, the NGO-assisted community stations have not resumed operations. The Voice of the Military Junta no longer broadcasts. National TV broadcasts from 7 p.m. to midnight on weekdays and 5 p.m. to midnight on weekends. Reportedly the government-controlled stations practice self-censorship.

On September 11, Attorney General Caetano Intchama entered Radio Pidjiguiti offices and demanded cassettes from an earlier broadcast reporting on President Yala. Intchama threatened to arrest the journalists after the staff refused to hand over the tapes. The next day, Intchama sent his bodyguards to intimidate the staff again.

On March 30, according to Amnesty International, a senior military official interrupted and stopped a live debate on Radio Bombolom on the events of November 2000 and the armed conflict of 1998-99, which he considered critical of the Government.

The Internet is available in the country, and the Government does not restrict its use.

The Government does not restrict academic freedom.

b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

The Constitution provides for the freedoms of assembly and association, and the Government generally respected these rights in practice. Permits are required for all assemblies and demonstrations. In November the Government initially banned an assembly organized by human rights NGO's and civil society groups to protest the President's conduct for security reasons but later permitted the assembly. It took place peacefully and without government interference. All private associations were required to register with the Government. There were no reports that any associations were denied registration.

c. Freedom of Religion

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion; however, the Government did not respect this right when in August President Yala abruptly expelled the Ahmadiya, an Islamic religious group, from the country; 11 members were deported (see Section 2.d.). He asserted that his actions were in the interests of the Muslim community. Yala declared he would support "real religious associations but not sects." The Ahmadiya (a Muslim group that originated in Pakistan and is an offshoot of Islam) came to the country in 1995. They believe their founder, Ahmady, to be a prophet, and they do not believe in the pilgrimage to Mecca as a pillar of Islam. The Supreme Court declared the expulsion unconstitutional; however, the Ahmadiya was not permitted to return by year's end. The President subsequently dismissed five of the justices (see Section 1.e.).

Although the Government must license religious groups, no applications were refused during the year; however, there were no reports that any applications were made.

Observers have noted that since the death in November 2000 of General Mane, who was an ethnic Mandinga and a Muslim, President Yala, who is an ethnic Balanta and a Christian, increasingly has been intolerant of other ethnic and religious groups.

d. Freedom of Movement Within the Country, Foreign Travel, Emigration, and Repatriation

The Constitution provides for these rights; however, the Government limited them in practice.

Checkpoints and police harassment occurred frequently during the year. After the outbreak of fighting in 1998, vehicle traffic was curtailed severely; however, during the year, such restriction was intermittent. Both government and rebel forces blocked the road from Bissau to the interior and interfered with the free movement of traffic. The Government carefully controlled movement within Bissau, prohibiting most traffic. Movement in the interior was restricted to a lesser extent, but it still was subjected to occasional interference by both government and rebel forces. The land borders with Senegal were closed to travelers during the early stages of the conflict. Since 2000 Senegal has allowed humanitarian convoys to transit the border. In previous years, the Government had closed the border with Senegal in reaction to cross-border raids by bandits in both

countries; however, this did not occur during the year.

The Minister of the Interior issues passports. In 2000 President Yala invalidated the passports of several politicians and placed them under house arrest in Bissau. At year's end, some remained under house arrest (see Section 1.d.).

Citizens have the right to return to the country and are not subject to revocation of their citizenship.

In August the President banned the Islamic group Ahmadiya (see Section 2.c.), and 11 members (all citizens of Pakistan) were expelled to Senegal (see Section 2.c.).

The law provides for the granting of asylee and refugee status in accordance with the 1951 U.N. Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. The Government has provided asylum to refugees from the conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and the Casamance region of Senegal. The Government cooperates with the office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other humanitarian organizations in assisting refugees. During the year, the UNHCR reported that more than 7,000 refugees, mostly Senegalese citizens, were in the country. The majority of these persons were along the country's northern border with Senegal. Sierra Leonean refugees continue to flee to the country in response to harassment in Guinea. The majority of the refugees live in the market place (Mercado de Bandim), sleeping in stalls and on rollaway mats. Some of the refugees earn money by selling handicrafts or through working in trades. Many depend on the charity of NGO's. The UNHCR reported that the country has been tolerant of these refugees.

There were no reports of the forced return of persons to a country where they feared persecution.

Section 3 Respect for Political Rights: The Right of Citizens to Change Their Government

The Constitution provides citizens with the right to change their government peacefully, and citizens exercise this right in practice through periodic, free, and fair elections held on the basis of universal suffrage.

In January 2000, voters elected President Koumba Yala with a 72 percent electoral majority in a runoff election following multiparty elections in 1999. Yala defeated interim president Malam Bacai Sanha of the PAIGC. International observers, foreign diplomats, and local NGO's considered both elections to be generally free and fair. Yala's party, the PRS, won 38 of 102 National Assembly seats. The victory of the PRS ended the 26-year domination by the PAIGC. The PAIGC, the country's only legal party from 1974 to 1991, and the majority party in the National Assembly until the 1999 elections, won 24 of the 102 seats in the National Assembly, while opposition parties gained a majority. In addition to the 38 seats won by the PRS, the Resistencia da Guine Bissau (RGB) won 29 seats, and 4 other parties split the remaining 11 seats. International observers judged the elections, which included candidates from 13 parties as well as several independents, to be generally free and fair, although they reported some irregularities.

The 1999 coup leader, General Ansumane Mane, made possible the process that brought Yala to the presidency; however, General Mane insisted on maintaining control over military funding and operations. This "coalition" government unraveled when President Yala sought to assert what he perceived as his legitimate constitutional authority. In November 2000, in response to President Yala's promotion of 30 officers without Mane's authorization, General Mane initiated a poorly organized, little-supported coup attempt. A week later, Mane was killed in a gun battle with military forces.

The President reshuffled his cabinet several times throughout the year. Between August and September, Yala dismissed Attorney General Rui Sanha and Interior Minister Artur Sanha, after the death of the Interior Minister's alleged mistress (see Section 4); Presidential Advisor on Social and Religious Affairs Ibrahima Djalo resigned after the expulsion of the Ahmadiya religious group from the country (see Sections 1.e., 2.c., and 2.d.). In December President Yala reshuffled his cabinet again. He replaced Prime Minister Faustino Imbali with Alamara Nhasse, formerly Minister of Interior. Following the reshuffle, the PRS held a majority of seats in the cabinet. The political situation was unstable at year's end.

In November President Yala informed the National Assembly of his ability to suspend it for up to 10 years. This threat followed a confrontation over limits on the President's constitutional powers and the independence of the judiciary after the expulsion of the Ahmadiya religious group (see Sections 1.d., 1.e., 2.c., and 6.a.). The National Assembly had criticized several of the President's actions. In November the President also threatened to replace 60 percent of the country's civil servants in order to "improve" the bureaucracy.

The percentage of women in government and politics does not correspond to their percentage of the

population. In the National Assembly, there were 9 women among the 102 members. There was one female minister in the Government.

Section 4 Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights

A number of domestic and international human rights groups generally operate without government restriction, investigating and publishing their findings on human rights cases. Government officials are somewhat cooperative and responsive to their views.

The LGDH was influential in the dismissal of Interior Minister Artur Sanha after the July 17 death of his alleged mistress Florinda Tavares (Minister Sanha denied their relationship). The LGDH consequently convinced President Yala to fire Sanha.

In December Amnesty International expressed concern over the fate of the 28 detainees arrested following the December 3 alleged coup (see Section 1.d.). Amnesty International also has recommended that the Government investigate various human rights abuses committed since November 2000, including General Mane's death, to further encourage reconciliation efforts.

Section 5 Discrimination Based on Race, Sex, Religion, Disability, Language, or Social Status

The Constitution and law prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, race, and religion; however, in practice, the Government does not enforce these provisions effectively.

Women

Domestic violence, including wife beating, is an accepted means of settling domestic disputes. Although police intervene in domestic disputes if requested, the Government has not undertaken specific measures to counter social pressure against reporting domestic violence, rape, incest, and other mistreatment of women.

The law prohibits prostitution, and there was no evidence that it is a problem.

Female genital mutilation (FGM), which is condemned widely by international health experts as damaging to both physical and psychological health, is practiced widely within certain ethnic groups, especially the Fulas and the Mandinkas. The practice is increasing as the Muslim population has grown and is being performed not only on adolescent girls, but also on babies as young as 4 months old. The Government has not outlawed the practice; however, it formed a national committee in the mid-1990's that continues to conduct a nationwide education campaign to discourage FGM. International NGO's, including the Swedish group Radda Barnen and Plan International, as well as several domestic NGO's, such as Friends of Children and Sinim Mira Nasseque, continued working through the national committee to eliminate FGM.

Official discrimination against women is prohibited by law; however, it persists. Women are responsible for most work on subsistence farms and have limited access to education, especially in rural areas. Adult illiteracy is 66 percent for men and 82 percent for women. Women do not have equal access to employment. Among certain ethnic groups, women cannot own or manage land or inherit property.

Traditional and Islamic law do not govern the status of women, and men and women are treated equally under the law.

Children

The Government allocates only limited resources for children's welfare and education. According to a November 2000 study by an international agency, enrollment in basic education rose from 42 percent in 1993 to 62 percent in 2000 (enrollment of girls increased from 32 percent to 45 percent, while the rate for boys increased from 55 percent to 79 percent). However, in 1998 10 percent of rural schools offered only the first grade, and 23 percent offered only the first and second grades.

FGM is performed commonly on young girls and sometimes even infants (see Section 5, Women).

Child labor is a problem (see Section 6.d.).

Persons with Disabilities

There is no law mandating accessibility. The law does not prohibit specifically discrimination against persons with disabilities, and the Government does not ensure equal access to employment and education; however, there were no reports of overt societal discrimination. The Government has made some efforts to assist veterans with disabilities through pension programs, but these programs do not address adequately veterans' health, housing, and food needs; there are no reports of funds for special programs for persons with disabilities.

Section 6 Worker Rights

a. The Right of Association

The Constitution provides all civilian workers with the freedom to form and join independent trade unions. However, the vast majority of the population works in subsistence agriculture. Most union members are government or parastatal employees; only a small percentage of workers are in the wage sector and are organized.

The Government registers all labor unions. There are 11 labor unions registered and operating in the country. All unions officially are independent of the Government, but seven unions are affiliated with the National Workers Union of Guinea-Bissau (UNTGB), which retains close informal ties with the PAIGC. The law does not favor UNTGB-affiliated unions over others.

The Constitution provides for the right to strike and protection for workers from retribution for strike activities. The only legal restriction on strike activity is the requirement for prior notice. In past years, several unions have conducted legal strikes with no retribution against the strikers. In October judges and prosecutors throughout the country organized a 30-day strike to protest the removal of the justices on charges of corruption (see Section 1.e.). Also in October, the Government locked out a number of judges returning to work at the end of their 30-day strike. The National Assembly criticized the lockout, and the judges were permitted to return after 1 day.

In March the Government's refusal to intervene on the behalf of the Union of Bissau Guinean Workers (UNTG) discouraged the union from continuing its strike, and employees of the national radio and television stations returned to work after walking out for up to 15 days.

During the year, the International Labor Organization's (ILO) Committee of Experts made 13 direct requests to the Government for information and 4 observations regarding the country's treatment and implementation of ILO conventions.

All unions are able to affiliate freely with national confederations and international labor organizations of their choice. The UNTGB is affiliated with the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. Individual unions belong to International Trade Secretariats.

b. The Right to Organize and Bargain Collectively

The Constitution does not provide for or protect the right to bargain collectively, and there were no instances of genuine collective bargaining. Most wages are established in bilateral negotiations between workers and employers, taking into consideration the minimum salaries set annually by the Government's Council of Ministers (see Section 6.e.).

The Government's provisions for the protection of workers against antiunion discrimination have very little effect due to low union membership. Although there are no laws providing sanctions against employers practicing such discrimination, no workers have alleged antiunion discrimination, and the practice is not believed to be widespread.

There are no export processing zones.

c. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The law prohibits forced or compulsory labor, and there were no reports that such practices occurred.

The law prohibits forced and bonded labor by children, and these prohibitions generally are enforced in the formal sector; however, children often are forced by their parents or guardians to work as street traders or agricultural laborers in the informal sector (see Section 6.d.). The Government has not taken action to combat such practices.

d. Status of Child Labor Practices and Minimum Age for Employment

The legal minimum age is 14 years for general factory labor and 18 years for heavy or dangerous labor, including all labor in mines. These minimum age requirements generally are followed in the small formal sector, but the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Civil Service and Labor do not enforce these requirements in other sectors.

The Government has not ratified ILO Convention 182 on the worst forms of child labor.

The law prohibits forced and bonded child labor; however, forced child labor is a problem (see Section 6.c.). Children in cities often work in street trading, and those in rural communities do domestic and fieldwork without pay. The Government does not attempt to discourage these practices.

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

The Government's Council of Ministers annually establishes minimum wage rates for all categories of work; however, it does not enforce them. The lowest monthly wage is approximately \$20 (14,800 CFA francs). This wage is insufficient to provide a decent standard of living for a worker and family, and workers must supplement their income through other work, reliance on the extended family, and subsistence agriculture.

The maximum number of hours permitted in a normal workweek without further compensation is 45, but the Government does not enforce this provision. With the breakdown of the formal economy in 1998, most of the country returned to barter, and both the Government and private sectors lacked the funds to pay salaries. Since January 2000, the Government has failed to pay on a regular basis its teachers, civil servants, and medical practitioners.

With the cooperation of the unions, the Ministry of Justice and Labor establishes legal health and safety standards for workers, which then are adopted into law by the National Assembly. However, these standards are not enforced, and many persons work under conditions that endanger their health and safety. Workers do not have the right to remove themselves from unsafe working conditions without losing their jobs. In view of the high unemployment rate, a worker who left for such reasons could be replaced easily.

f. Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits trafficking in persons, and there were no reports that persons were trafficked to, from, or within the country.

* On June 14, 1998, the United States Embassy suspended operations in the midst of heavy fighting in Guinea-Bissau and all official personnel in the country were evacuated. This report is based on information obtained by U.S. embassies in neighboring countries and from other sources.